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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 180720681-8999-02]

RTID 0648-XS001

Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic; 2019

Recreational Accountability Measure and Closure for South Atlantic Golden Tilefish

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS implements accountability measures (AMs) for the golden tilefish recreational sector in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the South Atlantic for the 2019 fishing year through this temporary rule. NMFS estimates recreational landings of golden tilefish in 2019 have reached the recreational annual catch limit (ACL). Therefore, NMFS closes the golden tilefish recreational sector in the South Atlantic EEZ on June 17, 2019. This closure is necessary to protect the golden tilefish resource.

DATES: This rule is effective 12:01 a.m., local time, June 17,

2019, until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2020.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Vara, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727-824-5305, email: *mary.vara@noaa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The snapper-grouper fishery of the South Atlantic includes golden tilefish and is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (FMP). The FMP was prepared by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and is implemented by NMFS under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

On January 2, 2018, NMFS published a final temporary rule in the **Federal Register** (83 FR 65) to reduce the combined ACL for golden tilefish in the South Atlantic to reduce overfishing of the stock. The final temporary rule was subsequently extended through January 3, 2019 (83 FR 28387; June 19, 2018). On January 4, 2019, NMFS implemented management measures for golden tilefish through a final rule for Amendment 28 to the Snapper-Grouper FMP (83 FR 233; December 4, 2018). This final rule set a recreational ACL of 2,316 fish (50 CFR 622.193(a)(2)(i)).

Landings data from the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center indicate that the golden tilefish recreational ACL of 2,316 fish has been reached. Therefore, this temporary rule implements an AM to close the golden tilefish recreational sector of the snapper-grouper fishery for the remainder of the 2019 fishing year. As a result, the recreational sector for golden tilefish in the South Atlantic EEZ will be closed effective 12:01 a.m., local time June 17, 2019. The recreational sector for golden tilefish will open on January 1, 2020, the beginning of the 2020 fishing year and the recreational fishing season. During the closure, the bag and possession limits for golden tilefish in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

Classification

The Regional Administrator for the NMFS Southeast Region has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of South Atlantic golden tilefish and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.193(a)(2)(i) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

These measures are exempt from the procedures of the Regulatory Flexibility Act because the temporary rule is issued

without opportunity for prior notice and comment.

This action responds to the best scientific information available. The AA finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the recreational sector for golden tilefish constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment on this temporary rule pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b) (B), because such procedures are unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the regulations at 50 CFR 622.193(a) (2) (i) have already been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the recreational closure for golden tilefish for the remainder of the 2019 fishing year. Prior notice and opportunity for comment are contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement this action to protect the golden tilefish resource. Time required for notice and public comment would allow for continued recreational harvest and further exceedance of the recreational ACL.

For the aforementioned reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) (3).

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: June 11, 2019.

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Jennifer M. Wallace,

Acting Director,

Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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